

## **“Violence against Women” – Abstract**

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### **I. Violence against Women: Exploring Sociocultural Analysis and Gender Construction**

### **II: Violence against Women: Exploring Gender Construction**

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## Introduction

Poem by Ntozake Shange (~70ties, African American Context)

"Every three minutes a woman is beaten  
Every five minutes a woman is raped  
Every ten minutes a little girl I molested...  
Everyday  
Women bodies are found  
In alleys and bedrooms / at the top of the stairs"<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction:

"Violence against women and children is all-pervasive", spread through classes, geographical area or type of persons. The list of abuse is endless as feminist documentations shows. <sup>2</sup> Well researched in the 80ies / 90ies.

Sexual violence as structural normative practices placed on a continuum of male power and control over women and children. There is verbal, emotional, economic, political, physical or sexual violence against women which has to be explored in systematic terms. Violence against women is not only generated by heterosexist patriarchal, but also by colonialist kyriarchal power.<sup>3</sup>

Ideals of women as a pressure and source of under-self-esteem. (p.xi following)

Religious politics and meanings<sup>4</sup>:

- 1.) Subordination of women / children roots in Greek / Roman Law, mediated through Holy Scriptures (Jewish, Christian, Islamic), especially Christian Household code. But indeed politic of single, only male priests increases sexual abuse by marital and ecclesial.
- 2.) Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Corinthians refers to marriage between Christ and the church, the story of sin came in the world through Eve has been amplified.
- 3.) Endure suffering in following Jesus just refers to suffering because of believing and therefore suffering. Silent theology about violence and the request for perfect obedience and self-sacrifice even encourage the circle of violence engendered by ecclesial / cultural / political structures instead of interrupting it.
- 4.) Is raped victims feel responsible or women don't divorce their violent relationship nothing changes. There is a patri-kyriarchal reading of scriptural texts and traditions, although the written ones had a totally opposite aim (anti-kyriarchal), e.g. Matt. 5-6. 18, 21-22. 1.Cor. 13,4-8. .

➔ Susan Hagood Lee "Witness to Christ, witness to pain: one women's journey through wife battering" in Annie Lally Milhaven (ed.), "Sermons seldom heard. Women proclaim their lives", NY, 1991.

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<sup>1</sup> Shange, Ntozake „With no immediate cause“, Nappy Edges, New York, 1972, in "introduction" in „violence against women“, p. VII.

<sup>2</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, „Introduction“, p.VII.

<sup>3</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, „Introduction“, p.X.

<sup>4</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, „Introduction“, p.xiii-xvii.

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## Feminine Socialization: Women as Victims and Collaborators

Mary John Mananzan, 44-52

Vicious Circle of violence / oppression develops out of the lack of consciousness of being oppressed. (p.44)

If victims are conditioned to be prone victimization they transfer this proneness to the next generation (p.44)

#### Women's stories:

1.) Diding (Philippine) joint organization "Amihan", she was asked if something changed in her life. She told that she learnt, it is her right, not to be beaten up by her husband. And now she was not beaten up by her husband during quarrels anymore as she once addressed that she respects his human dignity, he should respect hers. The beating should stop. Otherwise she would leave.

2.) Emma was seduced with thirteen years by Pedro. As she lost her virginity she thought to be useless and agreed to live with him. She started to beat her up during her 2<sup>nd</sup> pregnancy, because he was jealous. She threatened her with a sumpit, a home-made gun, and it actually went off and released bullets into her. So she was brought to hospital and then the WCC. A case against Pedro

was filed, but after she left the WCC after a year, it was dismissed as she said, she would love him. Sometimes Pedro visits her and she would sleep with him as she is afraid of him and dependent on the money he gives to her.

-> Questions, how these cases can develop? -> Patriarchal understanding

### **Patriarchy, the root of violence against women (p. 46 / 47):**

Romans / Hebrew society: Man / Father has absolute rights over the family members (even bible: Judges 19, 24 – Father offers daughter instead of guests), even considering that family members are his property – it is a social system which supports and authenticates the predominance of men, empowering and privileging them and with that controlling and subordinating women.

### **Socialization in the family (p. 47-49):**

Family the first environment in which a child learns what is the norm. In the family a girl learns her role as wife and mother. In a patriarch society a girl learns she is only valuable through maternity (virginity as not being married)

- ➔ Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Quebec Bishops “A Heritage of Violence”, Montreal 1989, quoted on p. 48:

“We recognize the vital influence of what we learn at an early age and of our first significant affective relationships. Depending on whether we live these experiences in an environment where control and force prevail, or in one that thrives on mutual respect and understanding, we develop differently as individuals, with different ways of relating to others. How many children learn to accept family violence as a fact of life and hence to justify men’s violent treatment of women? These children become adults burdened with unmet needs, ill-equipped to express their feelings and frustrations. They know no other means but violence to express their anguish. Thus another link is forged in an endless chain (33).”

- ➔ “Battered but not beaten: preventing wife battering in Canada”, Linda McLeod, Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women 1987 (23):

Studies have shown that fifty percent of batterers were battered as children. Fifty-two per cent witnessed violent behaviour in their original families.

### **Socialization in society (p. 49 / 50):**

School and mass media are the two most important socializing agents. Women are there as well presented in a subordinated way, because patriarchy shapes that as well.

### **Socializing women by religion (p. 50 / 51):**

Religious root of oppression of women exists:

Traditional interpretation of creation story (woman made out of man, woman led by temptation)

Christ showed remarkable breakthrough in his relationship with women, but apostles seem not to have learnt this aspect of his message, soon repatriarchalization of the early church. Fathers of the church first interpreter of the Gospels and therefore normative. The tradition kept on and developed further. (p. 51)

### **From Victim to Survivor: (P.51 / 52)**

Vicious circle of violence against women handed over by generations. Different powerful agents of our social life developed and supported them. Women were experiencing violence and low self-esteem as normal and a fact of life. So they became victims without knowing.

Women movements / Women’s discussion are now gaining and it is even significant that victims start to call them survivors as showing they feel more empowered. So the vicious circle seems to get cracks.

# “Go and suffer oppression!” said God’s messenger to Hagar – Repression of Women in Biblical Texts,

Irmgard Fischer, p. 75-82

There are biblical texts which legitimate social discrimination or even violence against women – from an early stage an issue of feminist scholarship. (75)

## 1.) Biblical Texts with sexual violence against women as their theme: (75 / 76)

Phyllis Trible: “Texts of terror”

->rape of the unnamed wife of the Levite (Judge 19f), Lot’s daughters (Gen 19), Tamar (II Sam. 13), Dinah (Gen. 34), abandonment of Sarah (Gen 12,10), Bathseba (II Sam. 11), adultery laid (Dan 13), legal regulations about the rape of virgins (Ex 22, 15f ; Dtn 22,23), acceptance of rape of slaves and virgin women as war prisoners by Israelites (Num. 31, 18),

->all text accepting violence against women, showing patriarchal character support institutionalization of (sexual) violence against women

-> Narratives adopt different attitudes in evaluating cases (sensitivity for social law(II Sam 13), rescue a woman from oppression (Gen 12, 10), God avenges injustice (II Sam 11, not always on woman’s behalf (Judge 19))

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: texts not clearly condemning violence should be evaluated as being from less authority of divine revelation, but should be read as a memory of suffering to open perspective of hope for liberation

Ancient Israelite society had a patriarchal constitution (few males in power over other males and then women / children) -> social imbalance because of sex through all texts. First Testament witnessing individual women (very strong, with political mark – although now having the same rights / possibilities as men). (p. 76)

## 2.) Androcentric Law legitimates violence against women

“Jealously Ordeal” in Num. 5, 11-31 as an example: evident that divine law and verdict are one-sidedly commandeered by and for males (violence against women and inequality of sexes) -> clear androcentric texts by preaching and exegesis.

## 3.) The Legitimation of the oppression of women in the process of theologizing by means of biblical texts

Difficult to deal with biblical texts which in their original form composed about liberation of women, but are reinterpreted repressively, e.g. stories of expulsion of Hagar (Gen. 16 ; 21, 8-21).

One central statement about (Israel’s) God’s nature: advocate of widows and orphans and those who have no helper (Ps. 146, 9; Dtn. 10,18), Confession of Israel to be a God who welcomes the socially weak and those without rights as well as God avenges transgressions against the rights of the poor and oppressed, a God of liberation from slavery -> no oppression in Israel (Dtn. 15,15). That is the **central theologoumenon** of Israel.

# Violence against Women: Strategies of Resistance and Sources of Healing in Christianity

Felisa Elizondo, 99-108

## An unhealed sore in Society

“Council of Europe for the Strasbourg Colloquium” (1987): documents of various forms of violence persist. But this sore is concealed, even by its victims. The phenomenon is difficult to quantify, published cases represent only the tip of the iceberg showing that different forms of violence (physical, mental, moral, sexual violence) suffered by women are mixed with feelings of shame and guilt -> self-inflicted injury (harassment / ill-treatment / humiliation kept secret or is regarded as something of private matter). Violence suffered within family / by a single woman is not addressed, agencies can't help them. But furthermore physical ill-treatment and humiliation cause serious traumas / leave after-effects. (p.99)

Theological studies can't ignore this abuse, but more over the ones who released their frustrations in that way should be degraded – the act itself shows their personal imbalance. (p.99f)

Ancestral suffering persists through shame and defenceless, but continues through the liberties of media showing women as consumer objects -> violence seems to be almost a cultural destiny. (p.100)

## Examination of conscience by the Christian Tradition

She considers the undervaluing inherent in the violence of men against women with worrying frequency. With that the devaluing of female identity becomes inherent. This inheritance should be brought to a crisis point to fill the vacuum of humanity represented by accepting inequality and its consequences. (100)

Christian history needs a healthy self-criticism, because the tradition is filled with male witnesses promoting the subordination in person of their mothers and wives. She quotes Augustine and Luis Vives. As well many studies have been produced recently showing that the archaic mentality did not allow the innovating potential of Christianity to flourish. More over these witnesses and the studies show how natural domestic violence and subordination have been considered which maintain the gender destiny as “daughters of Eve” lowering their self-esteem and continue the same understanding. Therefore a self-criticism of church history is needed as well as exploring the potential of liberation for liberation in Christianity.

## Submission in marriage

Medieval canonists and theologians took over the understanding of feminine inherited from the church fathers and scholarly authorities. They did not understand the principle of “equality in the lord”, but used the cultural hierarchical understanding and language. This language even reaches the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## From “feminine virtues” to virtue

The author observes that the Christian virtues of service and submission wrongly understood and practised become “female virtues” and accepting and believing in a second-class status of women. These virtues furthermore can be downgraded to duties and tasks and therefore dishonoured. Truly Service in Christian thinking can only become a virtue if it happens out of free choice to do so, out of freedom to do so. Otherwise it becomes servitude and denies the dignity of that person. Service freely chosen just as shown by Christ is the true virtue for regardless women or men.

## Conclusion (p. 106f.)

## Key-words:

Women, gender, GBV, strategies, society, biblical reflection